

REMARKS

This Amendment and the following remarks are intended to fully respond to the Office Action mailed August 3, 2006. In that Office Action, claims 1-9 and 14-19 were examined. Claims 1, 2, 8, 9, 14, 15 and 18 were rejected and claims 3-7, 16, 17 and 19 were objected to. More specifically, claims 1, 2, 8, 9, 14, 15 and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Himmel et al. (USPN 6,237,035), hereinafter “Himmel,” in view of Mattis et al. (USPN 6,292,880), hereinafter “Mattis;” and claims 3-7, 16, 17 and 19 were objected to as being dependent upon rejected base claims, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. Reconsideration of these rejections, as they might apply to the original and amended claims in view of these remarks, is respectfully requested.

In this Response, claims 3-9 and 16-19 have been amended; claims 1-2 and 14-15 have been canceled; and, new claims 36-43 have been added.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 2, 8, 9, 14, 15 and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Himmel in view of Mattis. Claims 1-2 and 14-15 have been canceled, and the rejections, as applied to these claims, are now moot. However, Applicants do not concede that the cancelled claims are not allowable over the stated prior art and reserve the right to file continuation applications pursuing these cancelled claims. Claims 8-9 and 18-19 were amended to depend from allowable base claims. As such, the rejections as applied to these amended claims are now moot.

Claim Objections

Claims 3-7, 16, 17 and 19 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. Claims 3-7, 16, and 17 have been rewritten in independent form and include the limitations of the base claims. As such, these claims are now allowable. Claims 8-9 and 18-19 were amended to depend from the allowable base claims. In addition, new claims 36-43 depend from one of the allowable base claims. As such, all claims currently present are allowable. Applicants respectfully request the issuance of a notice of allowance at the Examiner's earliest opportunity.

Conclusion

This Amendment fully responds to the Office Action mailed on August 3, 2006. Still, that Office Action may contain arguments and rejections and that are not directly addressed by this Amendment due to the fact that they are rendered moot in light of the preceding arguments in favor of patentability. Hence, failure of this Amendment to directly address an argument raised in the Office Action should not be taken as an indication that the Applicants believe the argument has merit. Furthermore, the claims of the present application may include other elements, not discussed in this Amendment, which are not shown, taught, or otherwise suggested by the art of record. Accordingly, the preceding arguments in favor of patentability are advanced without prejudice to other bases of patentability.

Please charge Deposit Account No. 13-2725 the amount of \$400 as payment for two additional independent claims. It is believed that no further fees are due with this Response. However, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiencies or credit any overpayment with respect to this patent application to deposit account number 13-2725.

In light of the above remarks and amendments, it is believed that the application is now in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested. Should any additional issues need to be resolved, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attempt to resolve those issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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